



MEDIA FAIRNESS INITIATIVE: A WEEKLY LOOK AT BIAS IN THE NEWS

Friday, November 16, 2007



Unfair Story Selection Shapes Public Opinion

Studies have found evidence of slanted news reporting for many years. A **November 12 article in Investor's Business Daily argues that unfair coverage – particularly with respect to story selection – has become more blatant during President Bush's term in office.**

The article also cites the recent Project for Excellence in Journalism/Harvard Shorenstein Center study, which found that news coverage of Iraq has declined as the situation there has improved. **The emphasis on negative stories as opposed to positive ones has been influential on public opinion, according to the article:**

“Relentless negativity has an impact. Recent IBD/TIPP polls show most Americans still don't believe the good news in Iraq. An earlier Pew poll taken immediately after Petraeus' positive testimony found 54% of Americans believed the military effort in Iraq ‘was not going well’ and 61% thought our efforts there were either making things ‘worse’ or having ‘no effect.’ Neither, of course, is true. How could this be? **It may well be because they neither see it in their daily newspapers, nor on the nightly TV news.**”

Liberal Magazine Describes Positive Coverage of Clinton

A recent study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Harvard's Shorenstein Center found that the media give far more favorable news coverage to Democrat presidential candidates than Republican candidates. The study received very little coverage in the media, but a recent article in the liberal *New Republic* magazine references the positive coverage of the Democrat frontrunner, Sen. Hillary Clinton.

Senior Editor Michael Crowley wrote that “**the press has showered Hillary with strikingly positive coverage.** ‘It's one of the few times I've seen journalists respect someone for beating the hell out of them,’ says a veteran Democratic media operative. The media has paved a smooth road for signature campaign moments like Hillary's campaign launch and her health care plan rollout and has dutifully advanced campaign-promoted themes like Hillary's ‘experience’ and expertise in military affairs.”

Guess the AP Hard News Story

Although all three of the excerpts below seem to come from liberal editorials, one of them actually came from an Associated Press hard news story. Can you guess which one?

1. “House Democrats pushed through an \$80 billion bill Friday to block the spread of a dreaded tax on middle income people.”
2. “The history of capital punishment in the United States has been filled with a peripatetic search for a method of killing that doesn't offend a blood-thirsty, yet tough-on-crime, yet squeamish public.”
3. “Beyond corroborating the State Department's incompetence, the spectacle of Washington letting its trigger-happy bodyguards off the hook wiped out whatever residual sense of legitimacy Iraqis may have still attached to the United States' mission.”

Answer: #1